



THE FLOATING FERRIES SWINGING IN THE WIND: A REALISTIC PORTRAYAL OF FISHERFOLK'S PLIGHT IN THE CONTEXT OF OCKHI IN 2017

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ABSTRACT

Language and literature are two sides of the same coin; they are very powerful media to convey emotions, feelings and knowledge. Literature plays an important role in the formation, modification and transformation of the society and its viewpoint. The attitude of the society is also reflected and echoed in literature. Literature gives voice to the voiceless people and portrays the reality of life with language and its features. Literary writings make people realize themselves and the societal problems like social-injustice, discrimination and marginalization. Literary writings have inspired many revolutionary movements for the rights of the marginalized people. Marginalization suppresses the minor and it is always inhuman and cruel. The marginalized communities are denied or restricted to access the freedom and rights in the society. The 21st century has undergone many makeovers and it has wiped out many evil practices and injustices of the past centuries, but still there are people who face marginalization from the mainstream of the society. Fishermen community is one such group that is socially, educationally and economically marginalized in the society. This paper titled "The floating ferries swinging in the wind: A realistic portrayal of fisherfolk's plight in the context of Ockhi in 2017" focuses on this issue.

KEYWORDS: *Ockhi, Fishermen Community, Marginalization, Education, Discrimination*

On November 30th2017, India was shocked with an unexpected gust of wind named 'Ockhi', that blew ferociously in various parts of the country, especially in the coastal districts of Tamilnadu and Kerala. The unexpected attack of the insensitive wind turned the whole situation tragic and pathetic. It took the lives of many poor fishermen and severely damaged the marginalized and the most underprivileged fishermen community. The costal areas of the state like 'Kanyakumari' and 'Trivandrum' were the most severely affected regions. People screamed loudly for their beloved ones who went to sea for earning the daily bread for their family. The beautiful seashore turned discoloured, the rhythmic nature of the waves

became irregular and the flapping sound of the angry waves sank in the high resonating cry of the sorrowful fishermen and their relatives.

'Ockhi' is considered as one of the strongest and intense cyclones that came after the cyclone 'Mega' in 2015. It originated in the gulf of Thailand. In the beginning it was not very dangerous, but later the nature of 'Ockhi' changed into deep depression which travelled through the Bay of Bengal, Srilanka and India. When it reached the south Indian coastal areas it turned completely destructive and uncontrollable. Many people lost their lives and many are not yet found after this destructive cyclone Ockhi. The members of the fishermen community have not yet recovered from the trauma of Ockhi.



Even after three years there are many families in the coastal areas who are still waiting for their beloved ones on the seashore.

The unexpected cyclone created a tragic situation in the coastal areas and other parts of the states. The state and central ministers and other governmental bodies came to console the poor fishermen community and they initiated and guided the rescue process in various parts of the states. The navy, coast guards and other rescue services were sent to various parts of the coastal area of Tamilnadu, Kerala and Lakshadweep. According to various news reports, 33,000 people from Kerala and 2,800 people from Tamilnadu were affected by Ockhi; more than 167 people are missing and 39 people died. However, it cannot be considered as the final number.

Along with the destruction it caused, ockhi also opened our eyes to the pathetic and tragic situation of the fishermen community. Fishermen community is marginalized from the main stream of the society due to various reasons including social, educational, economical and geographical reasons. They live in the coastal area of the states which itself is marginalised. They are almost digitally illiterate people. They go for fishing not to build a bungalow or to buy the latest model smartphones but to earn daily bread for their wives, children and parents.

For the fishermen, Sea is like their mother; they love her and worship her. They work day and night and overcome all the barriers like the climatic changes, storms and physical conditions. When they get into fishing boats, they never think about the waves and storms because they want to make little money for their survival.

Education plays an important role in the development and upliftment of every community in the society and it is the strongest key to access the world of knowledge. Unfortunately the marginalized people never get enough opportunities and exposure to access higher level education. Majority of the children of the fishermen are deprived of favourable atmosphere for education; boys stop education at secondary or higher secondary level. Compared to the other communities, the education status of the fishermen community is pathetic. So they should be given proper education and training.

Fishing is the major labour of the coastal area people. It is not a glamorous and easy job. The hardships of this job cannot be equated with those of white-collar jobs. It is often treated as a low standard job by the society. This is an important reason for the underprivileged condition of fisherfolk in the society. They never get a warm welcome from the mainstream of the Society. The happiest time in their life is when they get a big catch of fish from the sea and they celebrate it with their people. But the inconsistent nature of fishing job makes less

opportunity for them to celebrate. Sometimes they do not get a single fish from the sea. Then, they return with lots of disappointment and frustration to their homes, but still they never give up hope in their mother, the sea!

The living condition of fisherfolk is very poor and pathetic. Generally, there will be 3 or 4 families in a single house and it prevents them from enjoying freedom and privacy. They never experience life in its exact meaning and sense. They never get opportunities to interact with other people and communities. They live in their own marginalized world. The Ockhi and other cyclones come unexpectedly and make their lives horrible; the intensive storms wipe-out the hopes and wishes of the fishermen community.

CONCLUSION

Government and other organisations have implemented many plans for the betterment of the fishermen community, but many of them do not benefit the fisherfolk. Many types of equipment for fishing are distributed among fishermen community. However, unfortunately many of them are not very useful to them. Ockhi reminds us of the pathetic condition of the people. Even now the fishermen community has not come out of the traumatic experience of the deadly cyclone Ockhi. Most of the fishermen and their relatives are feeling unsecured and nervous to go for fishing or send their beloved ones for fishing. But, they have no other go, for unless they go they cannot take care of their household. The marginalisation affects different stages of growth and development of individuals, because from infancy to late adulthood they face insecurity and disheartening disparagement from the society. They do not need our sympathy or empathy; what they want is support from both government and society. Special attention is also to be given to the education of the fisherfolk's children which will help them shatter the shackles of marginalization. After the Okchi cyclone the fisherfolk has become weaker and more fragile, so everyone needs to stand with them and work for uplifting the fishermen community. This will give voice of this voiceless community and bring them to the mainstream of the society.

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